

Midrash and Parables

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Midrash

- Definition: Midrash is rabbinic biblical interpretation that has its base in a canonical scripture, though it might go far beyond analyzing just the written text of said scripture
 - Precursors to midrash found in Second Temple Period
- Interpretations didn't always agree
- Similarities between Gospel of Matthew and midrash
 - Fulfillment narratives
 - Genealogies
 - Scriptural duels

Parables

- Parables found in both Midrash and Gospel of Matthew
- Definition: fictional stories or statements that still illustrate something about reality
- Called “Mashal” in Hebrew, though this definition includes more than parables

Parable of the Wicked Tenants

“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

Mashal

It is like a king who owned a field and gave it to tenant-farmers. The tenant-farmers began to plunder the field. So he took it away from them, and gave the field to their children, but they were more wicked than their parents. So he took the field away from the children, and gave it to their children, but soon they too proved even more wicked. [Finally,] a son was born to the king. He said to the tenant-farmers: Get off my property. I do not want you on it. Give me back my portion that I may make it known as mine.

Comparison

- Similar story elements
 - Agriculture
 - Wicked tenants
 - Land given to someone better after tenants are kicked out
- Similar meanings
 - Poses one group as rightful owners of what another has lost a right to
 - Villanizes the ones who they are inheriting from
- Still have differences
 - Christians → glorify Jesus over Jewish authorities, unexplained parables
 - Midrash → glorify Israel and explain misfortunes as part of God's plan, paragraph explaining meaning of mashal

Works Cited

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